DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 230 FL 027 715

AUTHOR	Harris, Gabriele
TITLE	Global English and German Today. Occasional Paper.
INSTITUTION	Southampton Univ. (England). Centre for Language Education.
REPORT NO	CLE-OP-67
PUB DATE	2003-03-00
NOTE	17p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Centre for Language in Education, Research & Graduate School of Education, University of Southhampton, Southampton SO17 1BJ, England, United Kingdom. Tel: 00-44-0-1703-592433; Fax: 00-44-0-1703-593556; e-mail: rc4@soton.ac.uk; Web site: http://www.education.soton.ac.uk/research_and_centres/centres_and_divisions/.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; *German; Sociolinguistics
IDENTIFIERS	*Germany; Language Change; *Language Contact

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the impact of English as an international language on the German language and society. Even though English has influenced German linguistically for many years, the growing importance of English as a global language, and the increasingly dominant lingua franca in Europe, has drastically increased the presence of English in many domains of German life. This paper examines the role of English in contemporary German society, its impact on the German language, and attitudes toward English and the language change attributed to the influence of English. It concludes that, even though English has no official status in Germany, it plays an important role in many domains and is actively and passively used by many Germans. English has high prestige because it is considered a vital precondition for economic success. It is offered to most elementary school children at ever-younger ages as their first foreign language. English also serves as cultural identification in contemporary Germany. It is viewed as a symbol of internationalism and signals a new German identity that breaks with a nationalist past. German, like other languages, is undergoing rapid language change in response to fast technological, economic, and social change globally. An appendix presents examples of transference from English. (Contains 19 references.) (SM)

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Global English and German Today

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Centre for Language in Education: Occasional Paper No. 67

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March 2003

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Global English and German Today

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the impact of English as an International Language on the German language and German society. Even though English has influenced German linguistically for a long time the growing importance of English as a global language and as the increasingly dominant lingua franca in Europe has drastically increased the presence of English in many domains of life in Germany. This paper aims to discuss the role of English in contemporary German society, its impact on the German language, and attitudes towards English and the language change attributed to the influence of English.

The Importance of English in German Society

After the Second World War, there was extensive language contact with English in the western parts of Germany and Berlin. Clyne (1995: 201) says that particularly in the American occupied zone, a period of intensive language contact (due to the presence of American troops) started in 1945. Furthermore, American influence and aid were vital in shaping the political system and the economy of the old Federal Republic. Consequently, the USA provided Germany "with new concepts as well as the new vocabulary of politics, economics, technology and many other fields." (Clyne1995: 201)

Since then, the internationalisation of many domains with the use of English as a global lingua franca has had an additional impact. Clyne (1995: 201) includes economic, political and military alliances such as NATO, the European Union and the European Free Trade Association; scientific, technological and cultural co-operation; multinational companies; the mass media and international focus in the arts, popular culture, protest movements, the drug scene and pornography.

Consequently, increasing numbers of Germans need to use English to communicate with speakers of other languages across Europe and beyond, and it has been said that it is impossible to have an international business career in Germany without English (Hutton 1999: 1 in Erling 2002: 9). Holidays abroad are another powerful motivator:

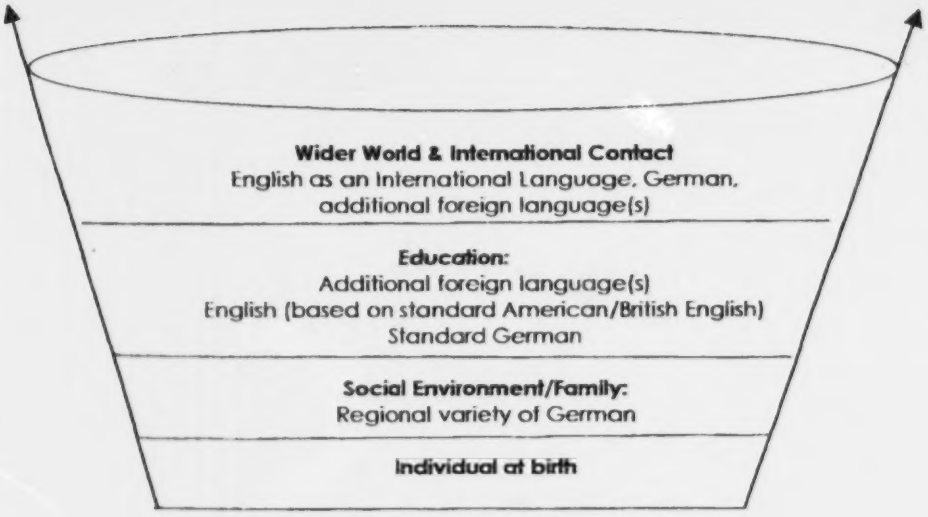
59% of Germans want to be able to speak English on holiday (European Commission 2001: 4).

However, as Erling (2002: 9) points out, English has no official status in Germany and there is no institutionalised domain for English. In contrast to other European countries, English-language TV programmes and films are dubbed into German. English-medium instruction in schools and universities is uncommon.

Still, according to the Institut für Bildungsmedien (2003: 1/2), English is generally the first foreign language children learn at school and the starting age has been lowered, so that in most German states children start learning English in primary school. The majority of children start to learn English from 9 years of age; from 2003/04 pupils in Baden-Württemberg will start at the age of 7, i.e. when they commence their formal schooling and it is expected that other states will follow.

The prestige of English is high, because most students and their parents consider it a vital prerequisite for economic success in the future. Therefore, many parents fund extended periods in an English-speaking country during the later stages of their children's school careers. A German student entering university will typically have learnt English for 9 or 10 years, and according to Erling (2002: 9), in many subjects they need at least a passive knowledge of English to read the literature written in their fields.

So, de facto, the German population is increasingly becoming multi-lingual (English plus standard German in addition to a regional dialect), and the communication problems currently encountered by politicians and business people should soon be a thing of the past (see below). As research by Convery et al (1997: 8) shows, German pupils learn at least two foreign languages (nearly a quarter learn three) with English being the first foreign language for most of them. So, the typical language development of an individual German mother-tongue speaker could be summarised in the model below:



(Based on Brumfit 1985: 57)

This process of language acquisition and use is repeated across the whole speech community, thus creating a multi-lingual society. The macro-acquisition of English might lead to a new multilingual variety of English (possibly across Europe) which is independent of the standard American and British varieties currently taught at German schools. Some argue, that this variety is already establishing itself: Erling (2002: 8) claims that typical 'errors' (e.g. "I learn English since 10 years.") made by German speakers of English are identical with linguistic features (e.g. simplification of the tense/aspect system) of New Englishes in post-colonial countries like India and Nigeria where there are now considered part of the standard varieties. And Modiano (2001: 13) says:

> IF, THROUGH a EU decree, a distinctive European variety of English became the official language, …, and was the standard for English language education, *second-language* status would be immediately established. Like India, Singapore, and Nigeria, the EU is a political entity where English functions as a lingua franca among linguistically diverse people.

Graddol (1997: 13) argues that the "European Union ... may be in the process of becoming a single geolinguistic region like India" with a hierarchic structure of languages topped by English, French and German with the position of French and German declining.

This entails that Germany, embedded in the EU, might be moving towards a situation, where the regional dialects, standard German and English co-exist in the speech community, but are assigned different functions. It is possible that English will gradually be used in more domains. As Kachru (1986: 59) points out in the context of India, in this situation the hierarchy of languages is "not necessarily permanent", but depends on what a particular language

> "accomplishes for the user in terms of status, identity, mobility, advancement. It may also depend on the attitude of a caste, class, or society at large ..."

And discussing the global picture, Graddol (1997: 14), says "English may take over some functions currently served by other languages ...".

It is therefore impossible to make accurate predictions about the future, but it can be claimed that globalisation has already led to an increasing omnipresence of English in daily life in Germany. As Erling (2002: 9) says:

> Germans often use English for interpersonal as well as professional purposes and do not have to wait to go abroad to use English and interact with English speakers.

The Impact Of English On The German Language

English also influences the German language itself. Contact with and borrowing from English is not a new phenomenon for German. It was already noticeable in the 19th century, and according to Bär (2000: 13-19) the influence of English on German is characteristic of the entire 20th century, but, in the last six decades due to the impact of social change and advances in technology the 'Anglicisation' of German has gathered momentum. Social change refers to top-down democratisation in West Germany after the Second World War and bottom-up democratisation from the 1960s,

e.g. the student movement, women's rights, the peace and green movement, and the expansion of higher education.

Further essential factors in consolidating an English language influence are the mass media including advertising which consciously uses English-derived neologisms and the World Wide Web. Bär (2000: 16) points out that the new media are not only a means of communication, but also new objects which need lexical items to describe them as they are themselves objects of communication. As the new technology tends to be generated by global companies which operate in English, the English terms are commonly imported into German with the objects themselves. We can therefore see that the factors that are changing the English language and have been central in creating a global English also apply to German.

The enormous impact of new communication technology on all aspects of life is reflected in large-scale borrowing from English. By 1980, 90% of new loanwords were derived from English (von Polenz 1999: 393). Computer-related language has its own specific vocabulary; e-mail and Internet have created new types of texts with specific morphological and syntactic features and particular styles. In 1999, there were 10 million Internet users in Germany – that means the Internet has a powerful influence on language (based on Bär 2000: 16).

The new media facilitate the global activities of multinational cooperations; they tend to use English as a lingua franca which increases the exposure of their employees to English. European integration, travel and more long stays abroad are other factors increasing language contact that encourage language change.

Clyne (1995: 202) stresses that "By far the most common type of transference from English has been at the lexical level" with some semantic transfers. There is little evidence of syntactic transfer. The total number of English-derived words is still only a small part of the German lexicon. According to Busse (in von Polenz 1999: 402), the share was only 3,46% in 1986 (see appendix for examples).

It is generally accepted (Bär 2000: 22/23, Hoberg 2000: 306, Clyne 1995: 217) that the 'Anglicisation' of German only affects particular registers; the number of

anglicisms is biggest in certain registers, e.g. technology and information science, advertising, journalism, economics, politics, entertainment – areas with new developments originating mainly in the USA. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this paper to analyse any of these in detail.

Another register, strongly influenced by English is youth language. Young people tend to borrow a type of English that is independent of the English of the education system. According to Zifonun (2000: 69), it is based on the English of popular music and entertainment (film, TV, electronic games) and of the print media aimed at young people. This partly reflects globalisation of entertainment and media, but also the wish of young people to appear cosmopolitan and international (Zifonun 2000: 71). This is not peculiar to Germany, though. Graddol (1997:49) says across Europe, non-native forms of English have acquired "identity functions for young people." He says that this is normally associated with second-language users.

German Attitudes Towards English

Quell (1997: 67) points out that the German speakers in a study on the European Commission were not satisfied with the dominance of English and French, but he also says (Quell 1997: 72) that unlike France, Germany has generally been showing restraint in supporting its language. Occasionally, though, there is German criticism of the EU's apparent failure to provide enough interpreters: Blome reported in the newspaper Die Welt (2/7/1999: 3) that Chancellor Schröder threatened German government officials would boycott meetings of ministers if no interpreters into German were provided. The paper argues that attempts like this are partly down to vanity, but more importantly, they are because the language barrier disadvantages German business.

In the same context, Friedrich says in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (6/7/1999: 29), that the boycott highlights not an unwillingness to speak English, but the fact that the language capability of German politicians and entrepreneurs is simply not good enough to cope successfully at a high linguistic level and that international communication in English leads therefore to damaging misunderstandings. However, the paper reports that German EU officials have a tendency to insist on using their

inadequate English language skills even when interpreters are available. The same reflex to use English rather than German applies to Germans travelling abroad.

This keenness to speak English is linked with a general openness to internationalisation in Germany which Clyne (1995: 200) and Zimmer (1997:7) argue, may partly be seen as a reaction to the xenophobia of the fascist era. So, German mother-tongue speakers may feel on more neutral ground when speaking English; an adequate command of English may be more than just cultural capital to gain good jobs, it may also symbolise a desire of many Germans to distance themselves from a racist past and to indicate readiness to embrace European unity. This is supported by Graddol (1997: 12) who says:

> English is not used simply as a 'default' language because it is the only language shared with another speaker; it is often used because it is culturally regarded as the appropriate language for a particular communicative context."

A study of European pupils (Convery et al 1997: 13) provides further evidence. It shows that young Germans overwhelmingly see themselves as Europeans. The choice to speak English rather than German in international situations may therefore serve to signal their positive attitude to European unification.

Attitudes Towards Language Change

We have seen that for the first time in history, German, like many other languages, is faced with a truly global language. Many welcome this, but some perceive it as linguistic colonisation and describe the current linguistic influence on German as pidginisation (Zimmer 1997: 71).

It may not be surprising that some people feel threatened by the flood of new loanwords, because the ubiquitous English in advertising, the media etc. can lead to a sense of exclusion by those who do not have the appropriate language skills. Two derogatory terms have been coined to describe the recent influx of English: DENGLISCH and GERMENG.

There are people who say that superfluous English words are destroying the German language. The ultra-conservative organisation for the protection of the German

language, Verein Deutsche Sprache (VDS, 2002), aims to curb the influence of English: "... wollen wir die Flut überflüssiger englischer Wörter zurückdrängen." (... we want to stem the tide of unnecessary English words.)

According to Hoberg (2000: 312), the emotional approach of the VDS is obscuring the phenomenon, as there are no superfluous words. Language is an economic system and 'unnecessary' lexical items, e.g. those used by advertisers to attract attention, do not establish themselves by default as part of the lexicon. Only words and phrases that refer to something that cannot be denoted in the same way by an existing lexeme will survive. For example, 'Kids' has a different meaning from 'Kinder'. While Kinder is the unmarked form (e.g. Wie viele Kinder haben Sie? = How many children have you got?), 'Kids' is a slightly ironic term for young people today. It does replace older anglicisms like teens and teenagers.

However, the critics are a minority. Hoberg (2000: 309-11) refers to a survey by the Institut für Deutsche Sprache from 1997 which shows that only a quarter of Germans find the language developments worrying with younger people being more accepting than older people.

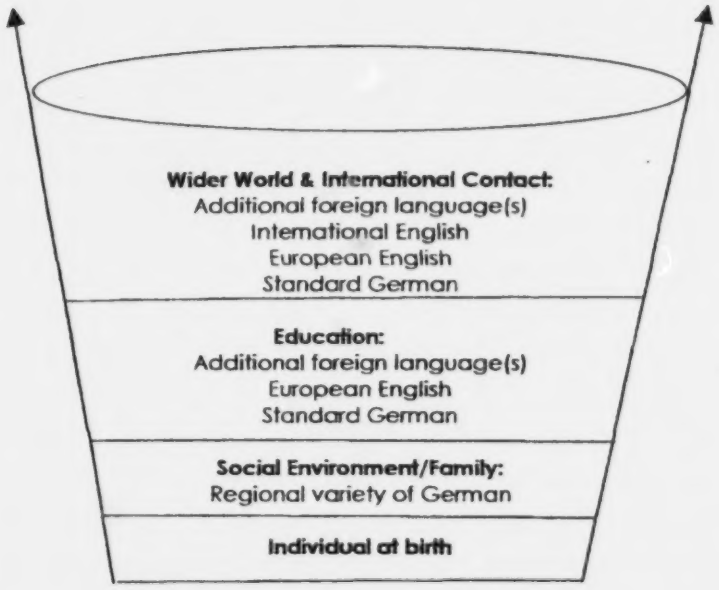
As we have seen above, the German state actively encourages the learning of English and the majority of German people use English to communicate and to express changed identities. It is a manifestation of the relative openness of German society that there is no national Academy aiming to cleanse the language from foreign influences in order to stop language change.

Conclusion

We have seen that, even though English has no official status in Germany, it plays an important role in many domains and is actively and passively used by many members of the German speech community. English has a high prestige because it is considered a vital precondition for economic success.

In response to the need to improve the nation's English language capability, English is offered to most primary school children at an ever-younger age as their first foreign language. In line with pan-European developments, a variety of English appears to be

establishing itself as a second language in Germany. Consequently, German society is increasingly multi-lingual, so that the earlier language acquisition/use model might have to be amended as follows:



(Based on Brumfit 1985: 57)

German children will learn English from day one of their school education as a second language and the English they learn may be a new variety of English: Euro-English rather than British or American English. They may also acquire global English, here named International English, to communicate with non-European speakers of English. Based on the current trend, they are also likely to learn further foreign languages.

German, like other languages, is undergoing rapid language change in response to fast technological, economic and social change globally, as there is, for example, a genuine need to denote new objects and concepts. The most common type of transference from English has therefore been at the lexical level with little evidence of

deeper grammatical changes being caused by English. Language change means enrichment, because the German lexicon is becoming more differentiated.

We have seen that English also serves cultural identification in contemporary Germany. English is seen as a symbol of internationalism and embracing English, either by speaking it as a lingua franca or by using anglicisms in German, signals a new German identity that breaks with a nationalistic past. Young people, in particular, feel part of a global youth culture that is based on the English of international pop music and entertainment.

English is no longer associated with certain countries, e.g. Britain or the USA, but it is seen as an independent medium of which German speakers of English, like other Europeans, take increasingly ownership themselves and in the process, a new English is developing. It is naïve to make English responsible for the changes to the German language and to speak of linguistic colonisation – there is an objective need and demand for these changes; English simply happens to supply the linguistic material – If it were not English another language would take on a similar role.

Appendix **Examples of Transference from English**

(based on Bär 2000: 19, Hoberg 2000: 307, Clyne 1995: 202-204 and my own corpus)

1. LEXICAL TRANSFERS

English words (form & meaning):
Action, Baby, Benchmark, Bestseller, Broker, Catering, Chatroom, cool, Display, Dreadlocks, E-book, Factory-Outlet, Feedback, File, fit, Hiphop, hi!, Hotline, Incentive, Joystick, Kids, Laptop, live, Manager, Meeting, Modem, Online-Surfer, Power, Punk, Public Relations, Scanner, Shareholder Value, Spreadsheet

Assimilated loanwords including homonyms of existing German words:
Beiprodukt, Datenverarbeitung (data processing), Drogenszene, Internetseite, joggen, raven, relaxen, sponsorn,

Loan translations including idioms:
Blumenkind (flower child), Dritte Welt (Third World), Entwicklungsland (developing country), Geben und Nehmen (give and take), grünes Licht geben (to give the green light), Herzschrittmacher (pacemaker), in einem Boot sein (to be in the same boat), Kalter Krieg (Cold War), Pille (pill), Sinn machen (make sense), sonnenbaden (sunbathe), Wolkenkratzer (sky-scraper), runterladen (download)

Loan creations (no resemblance to original):
Niethose (jeans), Rechner (computer)

Hybrids:
antouchen, BahnCard, Eigenvalue, Einkaufscenter, Instant-Kaffee, RegioCalls, Reiseshop, Talkrunde, Upgrade-Verfahren,

English language material is also used to create completely new words, which do not exist in English or have a different meaning:
Body (type of underwear), CityCalls (local calls within city), Dressman (male model), GermanCalls (national calls), Handy (mobile phone), Mobbing (bullying), Politsponsoring (donations for political parties), Reality-TV (docu-soap), Showmaster (TV presenter), Slip (underpants), Top-Preis (low prices), Twen (people in their twenties), Yeppies (young, European, professional & proud of it)

2. SEMANTIC TRANSFERS

Changes to word meaning (meaning of German word is extended to include English meaning):
realisieren (put into practice □ understand)
kontrollieren (check passports □ control areas)
kommunizieren (catholic ritual □ communicate with each other)
feuern (to shoot □ to sack somebody)

3. SYNTACTIC TRANSFERS

Transitivisation of verbs:

Ich fliege mit der Lufthansa.	□	Ich fliege Lufthansa.
Es wird befürchtet, dass 4000 tot seien.	□	4000 Tote befürchtet.

Early placement of genitive:

Der Bürgermeister von Hamburg	□	Hamburgs Bürgermeister

Possibly the use of English word order:

1) Ich bin heute Morgen in die Stadt gegangen.
□
Ich bin in die Stadt gefahren heute Morgen.

2) Warum hast du gestern Abend nicht angerufen?

□

Warum hast du nicht angerufen gestern Abend?

3) Ich trinke viel Wasser, weil es gesund ist.

□

Ich trinke viel Wasser, weil es ist gesund.

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